

## *UN: Improve literacy in Africa*

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*More needs to be done to improve literacy rates across Africa, according to the United Nations. Only six out of ten people in Africa can read - something the UN is highlighting. From Lagos, Caroline Duffield reports:*

20% of adults around the world are unable to read or write. But in Africa, the figure is thought to be **close to double that**, and the number is growing.

There are strong regional differences in the continent. West Africa suffers far more than Southern Africa, for example. While **literacy skills** have **the power to transform** individual lives and whole **communities**, the number of people here who are unable to read and write at present **poses a major barrier to** economic development in Africa.

The UN says those people **lacking access to education** are often the most **disadvantaged** and **marginalised** populations. A high percentage of them are women and girls, **indigenous** populations and people with **disabilities**.

Caroline Duffield, BBC News, Lagos

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>close to double that</b>	almost twice as high
<b>literacy skills</b>	knowing how and being able to read and write
<b>the power to transform</b>	the ability and means to change radically (for the better)
<b>communities</b>	a <b>community</b> means people, usually living in the same area, who are seen as a single group (e.g. because of their common interests or ethnic origin, or because they belong to the same social group)
<b>poses a major barrier to</b>	is a very significant obstruction/obstacle for; stops (something - here, economic development) from happening
<b>lacking access to education</b>	who have no means, primarily money, to go to school themselves or send their children there
<b>disadvantaged</b>	having lower level of living standards, education, health care etc. than most other people
<b>marginalised</b>	taken, or kept away from a position of power or influence; treated as unimportant
<b>indigenous</b>	always living in a particular area, rather than having arrived from elsewhere
<b>disabilities</b>	conditions of your body or mind (often physical and/or mental injuries, or traumas) that make it more difficult for you to do the things that other people do

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4420772.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/09/090918\\_witn\\_literacy.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/09/090918_witn_literacy.shtml)